



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI) - DRAFT

**Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate
Veterans Cemetery**

**Prepared For:
South Dakota Department of Veterans Services**

**Prepared By:
Great Plains Environmental**

May 15, 2015

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, and based on the analysis presented in the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate (SWO) Veterans Cemetery Environmental Assessment Draft, SWO has determined the approval of a federal grant, allowing the construction and operation of a cemetery on approximately 20 acres of undeveloped land, will not result in a significant impact on the human environment.

BACKGROUND

The SWO, acting with deference from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is responsible for the future construction and operation of a veteran's cemetery on approximately 20 acres of SWO owned property. In order to construct the project, federal grant funding is needed. SWO is requesting authorization of a federal grant made available by the VA's National Cemetery Association (NCA) Veterans Cemetery Grants Service, and will oversee the project's master planning process. Funding and construction of this proposed cemetery constitute the proposed action reviewed in this document.

The facility would be located on the existing SWO property, approximately 4 miles west of Sisseton, South Dakota, immediately southwest of the intersection between State Hwy 10 and Long Hollow Twp. Rd. The NCA grant will allow for the master plan to be realized. The master plan process will determine the maximum interment capacity of this site as well as all other features of this site, including but not limited to: entry features, roads, utilities and parking infrastructure, an avenue of flags, an assembly area, full-casket gravesites in pre-placed crypts, committal service shelter, columbarium niches and in-ground cremain burial sites, memorial walk, administration and public information building, public restroom and irrigation system. The master plan shall determine appropriate quantities sufficient enough to support the number of projected burial needs.

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide high quality burial facilities to eligible veterans within the SWO Lake Traverse Reservation. The need is generated by the projected death rates associated with the estimated current population of 13,177 tribal members located throughout the United States and overseas along with the need to accommodate the average numbers of veterans who choose to be buried in a veteran's cemetery.

Public involvement for the EA included scoping letters to various local, state, and federal agencies, adjacent landowners, and several tribal officials to announce the EA undertaking. Subsequent public involvement included public notices to announce the drafting of the EA. Two comments were received with none of the comments being considered substantive to warrant further public involvement.

A 30-day public scoping comment period began on March 25, 2015, and ended on April 25, 2015. Two comments were received. None of the comments were considered substantive to warrant further public involvement, pursuant to NEPA statutory requirements. The final EA will represent changes recommended by VA.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The SWO Lake Traverse Reservation has determined that the approval of a VA grant, allowing the construction of the proposed cemetery, will not significantly impact the environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted. This decision is based upon the following considerations:

1. Minor, short-term effects to air quality will occur as a result of construction activities associated with the development. These emissions would be controlled using standard construction best management practices. Additional traffic control measures (signage for construction vehicles, reduced speeds) may be implemented during construction.
2. No adverse impacts to populations defined under Environmental Justice regulations would occur. The project is expected to generate a small net positive economic benefit. The proposed action would result in a number of temporary (construction) and a small number of permanent (facility maintenance) jobs.
3. No jurisdictional waters of the U.S. as defined under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, would be impacted by the project. Additionally, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan will be developed to minimize sediment and other pollutant runoff during construction.
4. The project area was surveyed for cultural resources by SWO and have reached a determination of “No Historic Properties Affected”. All construction activities, temporary easements, and staging areas will be limited to within the project area. No further cultural resources investigations are recommended. However, in the event that cultural resources are encountered during construction and earth-moving for the proposed action, all ground-disturbing activities should cease, and the person in charge should immediately contact SWO for further evaluation.
5. To ensure compliance with the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, any nests of protected species found within the project area will be relocated prior to construction activities. No federally listed endangered, threatened, candidate, or proposed species are located within the project area. Therefore, the project is not expected to significantly impact any of these species.
6. To prevent the introduction of invasive species seeds, all earth-moving and hauling equipment shall be washed at the contractor's storage facility prior to entering the construction site.
7. No impacts to public health and safety are anticipated to occur as a result of the proposed action.
8. No significant impacts to visual resources are anticipated to occur as a result of the proposed action.